

ARCMANORO NILES

*You Know I Used To Love You but Now I Don't Think I Can:
There Ain't No Right Way To Say Goodbye Again*

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London



Arcmanoro Niles, *Living With A Broken Heart Made It Difficult When I Was Young And Bullet Proof (It's Easier To Miss You Than It Is To Let You Down)*, 2022 (detail).
Oil, acrylic, glitter on canvas, 77 x 59 inches (195.6 x 149.9 x 3.81 cm)

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Lehmann Maupin presents *You Know I Used To Love You but Now I Don't Think I Can: There Ain't No Right Way To Say Goodbye Again*, an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by New York-based artist Arcmanoro Niles. The exhibition marks the first presentation of the artist's work in Europe and his second with the gallery. Drawing upon a variety of genres, including portraiture, landscape, and still life, the works in *You Know I Used to Love You...* examine what it means to say goodbye to people, places, and behaviors. Across the exhibition, Niles employs an expressive color palette as he depicts moments of quiet rupture: experiencing loss and heartbreak, aging, leaving home, giving up habits.

Vividly capturing feeling and mood, the artist draws upon his own experiences primarily as a means of connecting to others. The artist's works are highly personal in their content, and Niles often depicts emotionally charged memories and scenes as he charts a record of contemporary existence that is simultaneously intimate and collective. "Painting has been a way for me to approach topics that I felt like I couldn't talk about growing up and things I feel like we don't always know how to talk about now," the artist stated. "I think a lot about how people deal or cope with aging, loneliness, heartbreak, and love. A lot of my paintings are reflections on these things."

For Niles, figuration offers a way into suggesting shared emotional experiences. The artist often depicts his subjects in moments of solitude and contemplation. *Growing Up May Be The Hardest Thing I Do (Healing Doesn't Happen In A Straight Line)* (all works 2022) shows a figure as he sits shirtless on a sofa, his gaze downcast and his hands gently clasped. In his *Living With a Broken Heart Made It Difficult When I Was Young and Bullet Proof (It's Easier To Miss You Than It Is To Let You Down)*, Niles shows another inwardly focused figure, seated in a hospital hallway in a wheelchair, his hands over his face. While often self-contained and introspective, Niles' life-size figures nevertheless directly engage viewers, mirroring their bodies and inviting them into a shared space.

The exhibition also examines other, subtler forms of loss. *Always Had Me Under Your Spell (Some Things Ain't Meant To Stay the Same)* depicts the park adjacent to the artist's former Brooklyn apartment, where he would frequently take breaks from painting to watch the setting sun. The work gestures both to the artist's nostalgic associations with place and to his own experiences of calm and self-reflection in nature. Indeed, in Niles's work, the natural landscape is also a landscape of memory and feeling. A still life, *I Don't Keep Liquor Here*

(*I Been Learning How To Do It All the Hard Way*), likewise explores connections between self and place. A countertop reveals traces of daily life, featuring objects such as bags of snacks sealed with clips, packages of wipes, a pair of oven mitts, and the work gestures to the artist's own experiences of sobriety primarily by way of omission. For Niles, still lives can function akin to portraits, suggesting both the presence and absence of a space's inhabitants and capturing the traces of themselves that they leave behind in their environments.

The London exhibition also includes new drawings, a medium to which Niles has recently returned. While the artist had not produced drawings outside his sketchbook since college, he revisited the medium over the past year, borrowing from his approaches to painting to reinvigorate his engagement with drawing. Across his drawings, Niles often allows for the surface of the paper to remain partly visible, and the artist strategically uses negative space, allowing room for absence as he endows his subjects with powerful presence.

For Niles, capturing the specificity of experience—with both text and image—is a way of making it more vivid and communicable to others. Here, and across his practice, the artist creates complex, highly evocative titles for his works. Niles works associatively, and image and text emerge simultaneously in his work, with each informing the other. Yet, Niles's works are never merely explanatory or didactic, and with his poetic, carefully crafted titles, Niles poses additional prompts and channels of engagement to his viewers.

While often somber and still in mood and content, the works in *You Know I Used to Love You...* are emphatically vibrant in color. The artist first began experimenting with non-traditional color palettes and techniques in part because of the frustration he felt as he attempted to depict the deep reds and purples and golden tones he saw in his own skin. He found that forgoing traditional painting techniques and introducing vibrant colors he loved allowed for a rich representation of darker skin. With his fluorescent figures, Niles offers an authentic, alternative mode for representing contemporary life. Even as he dispenses with a naturalistic color palette, Niles allows his figures' subjectivities to remain powerfully legible, and he uniquely grants his subjects visibility. With a color palette guided by expressivity rather than adherence to naturalism, Niles rejects overdetermined modes of representation and lends additional depth and complexity to subjectivity and experience. "When I let naturalism go," the artist stated, "the works ended up feeling more real to me."

Arcmanoro Niles (b. 1989, Washington, D.C.; lives and works in New York, NY) received a B.F.A. from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA in 2013 and an M.F.A. from New York Academy of Art, New York, NY in 2015. Solo exhibitions of his work have recently been organized at Lehmann Maupin, New York, NY (2021); UTA Artist Space, Los Angeles, CA (2020); Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York, NY (2019); Long Gallery, New York, NY (2017); and Guild Hall, East Hampton, NY (2016). His work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including *Black Melancholia*, Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY (2022); *A Place for Me: Figurative Painting Now*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA (2022); *Fire Figure Fantasy: Selections from ICA Miami's Collection*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; *From The Limitations Of Now*, Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, OK (2021); *Young, Gifted and Black: The Lumpkin-Boccuzzi Family Collection of Contemporary Art*, Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY (2020), Gallery 400 at the University of Illinois, Chicago, IL (2021), Lehigh University Art Galleries, Bethlehem, PA (2022), and Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, Davis, CA (2022); *Afrocosmologies: American Reflections*, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT (2019); *Punch*, Jeffrey Deitch, Los Angeles, CA (2019); *On Refusal: Representation & Resistance in Contemporary American Art*, The MAC Belfast, Northern Ireland (2019); *Problem Solving: Highlights from the Experimental Printmaking Institute*, Mechanical Hall Gallery, University of Delaware, Newark, DE (2018); *Portraits of Who We Are*, David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD (2018); and *Mutual Interest No. 3*, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China (2014).

His work is in numerous public and private collections, including the Aishti Foundation, Jal El Dib, Lebanon; Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; David C. Driskell Center at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; Petrucci Family Foundation Collection of African American Art, Asbury, NJ; Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL; Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ; Pond Society, Shanghai, China; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY; and Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China.



Arcmanoro Niles in his Brooklyn Studio, 2022. Photo by Daniel Kukla

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Rachel Lehmann and David Maupin co-founded Lehmann Maupin in 1996 in New York. Since Inception, Lehmann Maupin has served as a leading contemporary art gallery with locations in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. For over 25 years, Lehmann Maupin has been instrumental in introducing international artists in new geographies and building long-lasting curatorial relationships. Known for championing diverse voices, the gallery's program proudly features artists whose work challenges notions of identity. and shapes international culture. Today, the gallery has locations in New York, Hong Kong, Seoul and London, as well as a team in mainland China. In the past year with growing opportunities in new markets, the gallery has opened seasonal spaces in Aspen, Palm Beach, Taipei, and Beijing.



Lehmann Maupin London at Cromwell Place. Photo by Alex Delfanne